

East Jemez Resources Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes – February 7, 2002

Welcome and Introductions – John Mack

John Mack opened the East Jemez Resource Council (Council) meeting by introducing himself as the new chair. Thanks were given to Carey Bare and Todd Haagenstad for their continued efforts in organizing the Council's minutes, charter, and agenda. New members were welcomed and a round-table introduction was conducted before reviewing the meeting agenda.

EJRC: A Vision for the Next Five Years – All

John Mack led a discussion regarding the Council's potential vision for the next five years. Todd Haagenstad revisited earlier discussions that EJRC was intended to serve as a communications or collaborations venue for resources management issues of regional significance. He proposed development of an EJRC web site, hosted by RRES Division at LANL, as a place to enhance this communication. Diana Webb seconded the proposed action and recommended a "Reader's Forum" be added. She further emphasized the role of EJRC in providing a place for engaging in technical rather than political issues of regional concern. Members suggested having occasional discussions focused on common and recurring "central themes" (e.g., bark beetles, cultural resources) led by agencies or sub-groups within EJRC.

Myron Gonzales questioned if the 319 Grant secured by the Council's Pajarito Plateau Watershed Partnership Working Group was fully supported by the Council. The discussion shifted to the potential role of the Council as an endorsement, approval or decision-making body. Central comments focused on whether EJRC should elevate to this level and John Mack noted the charter does not currently identify this as part of the Council's function. Neil Weber (EJRC Co-chair 2002) spent last year revising the charter and stated his concerns that if EJRC were to become an approval authority it could cause tension within the Council if signatures were required. Additional comments were made about EJRC emphasizing/supporting themes as a group at which point Todd interjected a comment about the possibility of using EJRC to "cautiously mediate conflict on small-scale issues." A dialogue ensued about the possibility of EJRC removing emotion from issues by keeping open technical information/exchange as a means for mediating those issues. John Parker presented the idea of "consensus-driven resource papers" with members stating they could possibly be made available through the web site. Fred Johnson stated it would be better to amend the charter because mediation typically takes place between two parties, but issue resolution is a good goal. John Mack stated that the charter should note that signatures are not binding and that he would like to see status reports on central issues over the next five years to discern agencies comments.

The general consensus of EJRC's vision over the next five years included:

- Development of a web site which will include a "Reader's Forum" to share information among respective authorities. The Council agreed that Todd would take the lead, work with Brian Thompson, and attempt to have a trial site ready by next meeting.

- Increased opportunity to discuss regional comments/concerns from technical aspect to avoid politics. The Council agreed that the role of EJRC is not to become a decision-making entity, but rather to provide the best information for the decision-makers possibly through the formulation of white papers and/or presentations on recurring issues.
- EJRC will continue to look for opportunities for shared resources/collaborations.

Seeking Common Ground Update – John Mack

John reported that Seeking Common Ground is on the cusp of producing a public brochure and that a blue-line copy will be presented at their February 10th meeting before it goes to the printer. John also discussed the group's concern over the current issue of "parity" in management between elk and cattle and the semantics revolving around the use of the word. He explained that John Peterson had hoped to be at the EJRC meeting to explain the parity issue, but was unable to attend and may become a future EJRC agenda topic. John concluded by extending his assistance if anyone would like further information.

Cultural Resources Working Group Update – Rory Gauthier

Rory reported that the working group had met January 30th. Rory announced he would serve as chair of the working group for the year. The following updates were provided at the meeting:

- *USFS* – WUE projects in Coyote/Jemez Springs continue. Valle II project ready to go, but stalled by the preparation of the Environmental Assessment (EA). Espanola district got Cerro Grande Fire site assessment money back.
- *DOE* – reported on 3 DOE high profile EA's. LANL continues excavation of sites for conveyance/land transfer to pueblo. One hundred and eighteen (118) sites have been evaluated so far.
- *VCNP* – Continues work on roads for compliance. They have tested archaeological site near headquarters and a report is due out any day.
- *Bandelier National Monument (BNM)* – Continues inventory of park. Over 600 acres were surveyed last summer revealing 70 new sites. Monitoring will continue this summer with plan to inventory 1000 acres.
- *BNM, VCNP, LANL, USFS* – Will host the Pecos Conference in August 2005. Six hundred (600) people are expected over 3 days. The main conference will be on BNM property, camping will be on USFS property, and parking will be on LANL property.

Pajarito Plateau Watershed Partnership (PPWP) Working Group Update – Ken Mullen

Ken provided an update on the Clean Water Section 319 grant they received in 2001 and again thanked Bandelier for administering the grant. Craig Martin is the lead. School children have made 35,000 seed balls (seed, soil, clay) of 200,000 planned. Sixty acres out of 100 acres have been identified and 100 miles of trail have been reconstructed. Two public forums were held – one on bark beetles and the other on Pueblo Canyon. A \$10,000 interest-free loan has been secured. Ken also announced the formation of a new website: www.ppwatershed.org, which might serve as a useful link for the planned EJRC web site. Future plans for the working group include distribution of seed balls and planting riparian vegetation. The next working group meeting is planned for February 19th at 10:00 am. The agenda will include possible election of new officers, update on the 319 grant and planning for the next 319 grant.

Bark Beetle Update – Randy Balice

Randy announced the upcoming Native Plant Society Meeting at UNM-LA on August 8-10, 2003. Gary Ziehe will provide the keynote address, Craig Martin will discuss seed balls, and Randy will present updates on forest monitoring and bark beetles. Tours of the VCNP and burned areas will be available. Contact Randy for further information (balice@lanl.gov, 665-1270). Randy also provided an update on forest monitoring and discussed potential fire risks. Widespread mortality has been noted in Pueblo Canyon, Cochiti, and Sevilleta due to the drought. Sampling was conducted in August 2001, early 2002, and October/November 2002. Preliminary results indicate lots of dead trees primarily limited to piñon trees greater than 10 feet, although smaller trees have also been affected. Trees in the open have less chance of survival than those under other trees. Randy provided 2 handouts summarizing this information. He noted almost 95% mortality in Pueblo Canyon, stated mortality was roughly 70-80% across the entire landscape, and predicted continued mortality if drought and bark beetle conditions continue. When asked if wood chips would promote beetle infestation, Randy was not fully sure but stated chips do attract *Ips* spp., which are specific to piñon-juniper. Randy was asked if the current bark beetle infestation could promote an increased occurrence of Hanta virus due to increased populations of piñon mice. Randy referenced a study done by Dr. Terry Yates at UNM that correlated virus cycles with moisture, but the Council's consensus was that mice populations increase with increasing moisture and may actually decline as the drought continues.

Round Table Updates and Discussions – All

DOE Area Office (John Stetson) – stated they are currently working on 3 projects:

- Hiking trails on DOE land and a proposed EA looking at resource impacts by uncontrolled use. He invited the County, BNM, and USFS to collaborate.
- New sanitary landfill for Los Alamos County and LANL. They have been working closely with Ray Sisneros scooping locations in the 75-100 acre range and trying to meet a June 4, 2004 regulatory deadline. Potential sites included TA 70/71 and TA-49, but were narrowed down to TA-16 and TA-61 due to size. A public meeting will be held February 27th at Fuller Lodge from 6:30 – 8:00 pm to present site descriptions, posters, and operational aspects.
- The County is in the early stages of looking at leasing land from DOE for new distribution center on East Jemez Road bordering San Ildefonso and BNM.

John also stated they are producing monthly NEPA status reports and people could contact him to be put on the list (jstetson@doeal.gov, 667-0575).

San Ildefonso (Myron Gonzales and Neil Weber)- Neil stated San Ildefonso is working on water quality standards. A final draft is not yet available. It will go through the tribal council and then a public hearing. Myron said they are continuing post-Cerro Grande fire mitigation work on the 118 cultural resources sites assessed. They will continue to work with LANL on the airport and White Rock sites. Bosque restoration continues at San Ildefonso and many Russian olives have been eliminated. Tribal Historic Preservation Office at pueblo is producing a white paper on 5-year plan. When asked about the status of the land transfer project, Myron said there were still some topics being worked out between the county and the pueblo. The pueblo did get TA-74 back, but re-aligning the Norton line is still an issue.

Bandelier National Monument (Steve Bone) – Steve discussed the present EIS on restoration and fire management programs. He met with Gary Ziehe at VCNP last week. At Emergency Management Office meetings they are preparing for another big fire season and anticipate the grounding of air tankers to continue. They are also looking at funding issues and opportunities.

VCNP (Gary Ziehe) – Gary stated that VCNP NEPA procedures were submitted yesterday and would be published in the Federal Register next week with comments accepted through March. Gary said the VCNP is looking for new and innovative ways to implement laws. There will be a CEQ review after public comment and then the VCNP Board will conduct a final review. They plan to have the document on the VCNP web site by the end of the week. Gary also stated the VCNP is working on an innovative “Comprehensive Management Plan” to address potential impacts to resources and how to manage public access/involvement. The plan will be a combination of a records system and adaptive management based on monitoring and strategic guidance for activities in the foreseeable future. A retreat is planned for February 19-21 in Santa Fe to put together a document for public review. The VCNP has hired a person to develop their Public Recreation Program.

Los Alamos County (Fred Johnson) – Fred discussed the open space and park system management components of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. A Trail Management Plan has been updated from 1994 and will be reviewed by the board before going to the Los Alamos County Council. Other current county issues include drought and bark beetle, fire mitigation, erosion issues, and the sewage treatment plan.

LANL RRES-ECO (Todd Haagenstad) – Todd reviewed current resource management issues and concerns to future operations. Included in his update were the upcoming fire season, its high-risk status, and how to prepare for it. Todd reiterated concerns discussed at IWMT meetings about the possibility that air tankers will be grounded during the upcoming fire season. The concern over what to do with dead trees will likely be addressed at Laboratory’s Operations Directorate level. Todd also discussed the site-wide Integrated Natural and Cultural Resources Management Plan (IRMP). The IRMP is a DOE/NNSA document completed at the end fiscal year 2002, that provides the framework for integrating the management of natural and cultural resources with the mission of the Laboratory. It was transmitted from Ralph Erickson to John Browne with direction to implement beginning fiscal year 2003. The plan has been distributed to DOE/NNSA public reading rooms.

Santa Clara (Jason Garcia) – Jason discussed current forest restoration activities (e.g., contour felling, seeding, mulching of Russian olive and salt cedar). He stated roughly 60% of trees planted are successful despite lack of moisture. Santa Clara is also having problems with beetles in piñon-juniper woodlands. They also reported an unsuccessful attempt to capture elk several weeks prior to the EJRC meeting.

Future Agenda Items and Closing Remarks – All

The following were suggested as possible future agenda items:

- Drought, beetles, weather, and fire implications (discussions to be led by Randy Balice?)
- Cultural resource issues
- Watershed issues (e.g., San Ildefonso and water quality standards)

- Recreational land use in light of DOE's impending EA's, current concerns for VCNP, the county's requests for motorized trail use, and restrictions on land transferred to the pueblos
- Impacts of the Cerro Grande Fire (e.g., pollutant transport, rehabilitation efforts) given the final year of funding. John Mack and Todd Haagenstad both suggested November as a good time to discuss these issues after funds expire in September.
- Silvery minnow and corresponding low river levels

In closing, Todd agreed to revise the EJRC Charter one more time. He encouraged anyone and everyone who might want to be placed on the list to sign.